

VILLA VIEWS

The Newsletter
of St. Joseph's Villa

SPRING 2020

VIRTUAL REALITY, REAL-WORLD SKILLS

Partnership creates new communication opportunities for students with autism

At the Villa, we actively seek out innovative solutions to enhance the education and care of our students. Virtual reality is our latest tool for teaching Sarah Dooley Center for Autism students how to engage with their communities in a wide range of environments and social situations.

In partnership with Floreo, an autism education app inspired by Applied Behavior Analysis, we piloted the use of virtual reality with eight students from two different classrooms. Students responded positively to the learning modules and showed measurable improvements in imitating, gesturing, and making eye contact.

Floreo immerses students in real-world scenarios where they can practice interacting with police officers on the street, talking with other students in school hallways, and trick-or-treating – experiences that would be otherwise difficult to simulate in our Center or at home. Virtual reality allows students to repeat the experiences and build a comfort level with the guidance of their teachers.

Not only is virtual reality a fun and progressive way for our students to learn, it enables our teachers to track results. So far, those results show real promise.

COVID-19 Update: How the Villa is adapting to serve deeper community needs

Dear Villa friends:

When news broke of the escalating COVID-19 pandemic, Villa leadership immediately rallied to form a plan. Our goals were simple: protect the health of the people we serve and the safety of our staff, and take steps to ensure the Villa remains on solid financial footing during this period and thrives in the future.

Following Governor Northam's orders to close schools, the Villa's education team adapted curricula and technology to continue meeting students' IEP goals through distance learning, and provide uninterrupted support to parents balancing childcare, mental health needs and careers at home. Many of our students also face significant food barriers, and rely on the Villa for two meals a day. Our staff prepared 25 bags of take-home food prior to statewide school closures, and we are still delivering meals to families in crisis now.

The COVID-19 health crisis has challenged us to find new ways to deliver education and therapy, and we are rising to that challenge.

*Continued on
next page.*



Kathleen Burke Barrett
Chief Executive Officer

COVID-19 Update (continued)

Although we have temporarily closed our campus, our Community-Based Services and Flagler Housing & Homeless Services continue to operate, and our Crisis Stabilization Unit remains open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. We also quickly introduced telehealth as a new way to connect with youth and adults in need of mental health support.

Our RiseUP Campaign is still going strong. Construction on our new Sarah Dooley Center for Autism is on schedule with thorough safety precautions in place, and we are optimistic that it will be ready to welcome students early next year. Our excitement continues to build as we see our vision for the Center come to life. New energy-efficient windows have been installed and the two-story wall between what will be the Welcome Lobby and Campus Center for public trainings has been demolished. I hope you will continue to follow our progress at www.SJVRiseUP.org.

I often speak of the three brave Daughters of Charity who came to Richmond in 1834 to open the Villa. Today, I see faithful and fearless men and women, who in 2020 are working tirelessly to navigate these challenging times. I am truly grateful for our dedicated team, and you, our generous supporters, who never stop believing in our children and families. Your contributions make a profound difference in the lives of those we serve, now more than ever as we all work together to recover from the impacts of COVID-19.

Thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,

Kathleen B. Barrett

Kathleen Burke Barrett
Chief Executive Officer

Congresswoman Abigail Spanberger invites Villa students to D.C.

When Congresswoman Abigail Spanberger visited the Villa in January for a tour of our programs, she was met with many questions from excited students who wanted to know more about working in government. Rep. Spanberger kindly followed her visit by inviting Villa students to her office at the U.S. Capitol for a first-hand look. The visit to Washington D.C. was a first for many students – and what an incredible experience it was.



legislation they had discussed with Rep. Spanberger earlier.

The trip began at Rep. Spanberger's office, where she shared the legislative items on the agenda that day. From there, her staff escorted our students and faculty through the long tunnels under the Capitol to start a 45-minute walking tour. Students watched an educational video, visited the awe-inspiring National Statuary Hall collection, and witnessed the House of Representatives voting on the

"This was the best trip we've taken this year," said Mysonne, Dooley Center for Alternative Education student.

Special thanks to our Career and Transition Services team for coordinating the trip, and to Rep. Spanberger for exposing our students to a side of our government they hadn't seen before.



Rep. Spanberger welcomes the Villa's Brook Road Academy and Dooley Center for Alternative Education students to her office at the U.S. Capitol.

You can give Villa families a hand up at The Giving Wall

There have been times in all of our lives when we've needed a hand up. Many of our clients are unable to lift themselves out of crisis because of the recurrence of urgent needs that they don't have the money to buy. Car parts. Medical bills. Training for a promotion. The Giving Wall is a new digital platform designed to support the progress of people living beneath the poverty line, by connecting their needs to members of our community who want to help. Please visit www.thegivingwall.org to find posted needs for Villa clients, and purchase a product or service that will set them up for success. At a time when the most vulnerable among us need our help, we are proud to take action with The Giving Wall, and with you.



thegivingwall

THANK YOU VOLUNTEERS

for creating brighter futures


Volunteers change lives in countless ways at St. Joseph's Villa. We are grateful for the time, commitment, expertise, and passion individuals and organizations give to our mission.

Your dedication to helping others is celebrated every day, and especially valuable in these unprecedented times.

To find out how you can get involved today, please contact our Director of Community Engagement at 804-521-5577 or visit our website at NeverStopBelieving.org



LEWIS INSURANCE ASSOCIATES
proudly supports St. Joseph's Villa



www.lewisins.com

Thanks to Lewis Insurance Associates for sponsoring this newsletter.



FOLLOW US ON INSTAGRAM!

@stjosephsvilla

Madison finds an outlet with In-Home Behavioral Treatment

Madison's* parents were running out of options – and hope – after nothing helped her regular aggressive outbursts that seemed to come out of nowhere. Madison had a history of self-injury, and as she grew her behaviors resulted in injuries to her parents as well. She would hit her head, throw or break her glasses, and “charge at” family members at home.

Madison began In-Home Behavioral Treatment (IHBT) with the Villa last year, with the goal of developing coping and anger management skills. Our clinician has been teaching her how to use space as a coping mechanism, and encouraging her family to

reinforce the idea. Madison's bedroom became her “quiet spot.”

During a recent treatment session, Madison was upset about the weather. She expressed that it made her “sad” and independently removed herself to her room. She stopped at the doorway, took off her glasses and handed them to Mom, then walked in and closed the door. Ten minutes later, Madison calmly came out and completed her session without incident. Madison continues to improve her behaviors with IHBT, and her parents say they've found the hope they were looking for.

**Name changed to protect privacy*

Inside:

THE VILLA GOES TO WASHINGTON

Congresswoman Spanberger invites students for U.S. Capitol visit

A NEW WAY TO LIFT UP FAMILIES

Villa partners with The Giving Wall to meet urgent client needs

HOPE SPRINGS

Madison builds coping skills through In-Home Behavioral Treatment

We never stop believing in children and their families.

St. Joseph's Villa Board of Trustees

Cynthia P. Balderson, *Chair*
Kathleen Burke Barrett, *Executive Vice President*
Darren J. Nolt, *Secretary*
Suzanne K. Hinton, *Treasurer*
Richard P. Wintsch, *Chair-Elect*
Donald Alexander
Byron D. Berry
John B. Catlett, Jr.
Kathleen C. Duke
John C. Gentry
Pamela J. Hacker
Brantley D. Hathaway
Chris M. Layne
Mark D. Nichols
Linda M. Warren
Robert G. Watts, Jr.
Katina Williams
Thomas S. Zachry

Jamari's journey to find language

Missy recognized the signs of autism when her son Jamari stopped speaking and making eye contact. She had worked with autistic adults for years. His doctor, however, said it was just a phase because he wasn't getting enough attention from his new babysitter. She sought a second opinion, and Jamari was diagnosed in 30 minutes. He was 21 months old.

Since then, Missy says Jamari has received years of excellent education in Louisa County Public Schools, where she now works as an instructional assistant, but it wasn't enough to meet his individual needs. After a long period of advocating for Jamari, she was able to get him placed at the Villa's Sarah Dooley Center for Autism.



Jamari came to us five years ago, completely nonverbal. Today he is using language assistive technology and vocalizing words. He can count to 100 and point out colors. He loves animal therapy, and he is learning to horseback ride at Mesa Vista Farm in Powhatan through SDCA's community-based instruction.

"Bringing Jamari to SDCA was the best decision I ever made," said Missy. "Our lives have changed."